



DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520

1 May 1969

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MEMORANDUM TO: ACDA - Mr. Smith
AEC - Dr. Seaborg
DOD - Mr. Packard
JCS - General Allison
✓CIA - Mr. Clarke
White House - Mr. Sonnenfeldt
Mr. Keeny

SUBJECT : Strategic Missile Talks: Related Aspects of
Satellite Reconnaissance Disclosure Policy

I ask your consideration of the attached paper prepared by the Department of State on the above subject, as well as of several recommended procedures for handling this paper by the NSSM 28 Committee. Both the paper and the recommended procedures have been discussed with the Director of ACDA and have his approval.

The paper deals with several aspects of our observation satellite disclosure policy as related to strategic arms limitation talks (SALT) with the Soviets. Some of these questions might have been dealt with by the so-called NSAM 156 Committee. However, I believe that the NSSM 28 Steering Committee is the proper forum for review of this paper because the paper does not establish any basic new policy, but merely sets forth general guidelines for the tactical handling of the question of observation satellites in connection with SALT.

Accordingly, I propose, and Gerard Smith agrees, that the NSSM 28 Steering Committee consider the attached paper at its next meeting. At that time, the Committee can decide whether to submit the approved paper along with its basic report to the NSC, or whether to handle it in another fashion. Either way, there will be a need for early decisions on several matters raised in this paper; among the first steps we will have to take following an NSC decision to enter SALT, assuming this will be the case, will be to consult with Congress and our Allies, before entering negotiations. It should be noted that, prior to these consultations, there will be discussions among the agencies most directly involved on the best means of implementing the general guidelines set forth in the attached paper.

I am sending a copy of this memorandum to the Administrator of NASA, since that agency is not represented on the NSSM 28 Steering Committee.

STATE review(s) completed.

DD/S&T
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Signature: a/s

W. Alexis Johnson
Under Secretary for Political Affairs

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STRATEGIC MISSILE TALKS

RELATED ASPECTS OF SATELLITE RECONNAISSANCE DISCLOSURE POLICY

DISCUSSION

In the prospective strategic arms limitation talks with the USSR, there are three alternative approaches the US might take in regard to the problem of verification:

(1) A position which stated from the outset of negotiations that the US was prepared to place exclusive reliance on national means of verification;

(2) A position which called in addition for limited on-site inspection, but which would be prepared, if the Soviets objected to this proposition, to fall back to exclusive reliance on national means; or,

(3) A position which called for limited on-site inspection, without any prior decision by the US Government regarding a possible fall-back position.

Whichever approach is adopted, it is clear that national means of verification will provide the foundation of an eventual agreement. It is only the development of such means which has made a realistic consideration of a limitation on strategic arms possible. Aside from likely Soviet objections to provision for on-site inspections, national

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declassification

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means of verification, in particular, observation satellites, provide the only feasible means of policing an agreement of the type and scope the United States has in mind.

At the same time, it is vital to United States security interests to preserve the full integrity of its intelligence operations, particularly, in this instance, the unimpeded operation of observation satellites. The unique value of observation and other intelligence-gathering satellites in this regard has been amply demonstrated in recent years, and needs no further elaboration.

The United States Government has established policy and information guidelines which have effectively accomplished this purpose. However, it is evident that these guidelines will have to be adjusted if the United States is to pursue the significant undertaking of reaching an agreement on limiting strategic missiles. We will have to discuss "national means of verification" with the Soviets. Congress and our Allies will have to be convinced that reliance on such means can effectively verify an agreement and thus safeguard Western security interests. And the American public and press will have to be given similar, though less explicit, assurances.

This paper does not address the question of downgrading the classification, or declassifying altogether, certain information relating to our reconnaissance satellite program -- i.e., the simple fact that the United States conducts such operations.

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POSITION

Negotiations with the USSR. One over-riding tactical consideration has guided the United States in regard to reconnaissance satellites: to avoid an open confrontation with the Soviets over this issue. It has been reasoned that if the Soviets, who have knowledge of our satellite operations, were not forced publicly to challenge these operations, they would be more inclined tacitly to accept them.

This has so far proven to be the case. The danger of a confrontation has also been diminished by the development by the Soviets of their own, extensive, observation satellite program.

Even so, it is still sound policy to avoid a confrontation. There is some evidence that the planned arms control talks, while they will involve an exchange of views, will not undercut this policy; indeed, they could enhance the security of the United States information-gathering satellite program.

In the first instance, the United States has communicated to the Soviets its intention to place "maximum reliance on national means of verification." The Soviets must be fully aware of the meaning of this phrase, and have given no indication that they object to the proposition. Secondly, the talks, if they result in an agreement, would have the effect of formalizing Soviet acceptance of the US program (and vice versa). No agreement would be possible without such acceptance.

In keeping with these considerations, the Delegation is authorized, at a time of its choosing, to indicate to the Soviets that the term,

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"national means of verification," includes the use of "information-gathering satellites". No further effort should be made to define this term without instructions from Washington.

In the course of the talks, the Delegation should establish a negotiating history to the effect that our willingness to conclude an agreement of this scope with maximum reliance on national means of verification is based on the assumption that one side will not impede the operation of the other's information-gathering satellites.

Finally, in discussing a withdrawal article, the Delegation should point out that any action by one party which interferes significantly with the other's verification capability or otherwise affects the capability of the other party to verify compliance with the agreement would constitute one of the grounds for withdrawal.

While all of these points should be made in the course of discussions, the Delegation should bear in mind the desirability of avoiding an unnecessary confrontation and should proceed with appropriate caution. Further, the Delegation should avoid revealing the effectiveness of our satellite intelligence systems. This applies both to discussion of verification per se as well as to the elaboration of our proposal which, in certain aspects, could reveal indirectly more than we would wish to regarding our capabilities. The matter would be blurred somewhat by the introduction of proposals for on-site inspection in regard to certain gray areas. But this is a problem to which the Delegation will have to give careful attention. The best approach would be: (1) confine

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discussion of our positive capabilities for national verification to generalities; and (2) limit discussion of details concerning our verification capabilities to those areas of the proposed agreement where there is some doubt as to full effectiveness of national means.

Consultation. It will be important to assure our most important Allies (NATO members, Japan) that the proposal we are advancing will protect United States and Allied security interests, in regard to both the substance of the proposal and the capability to verify effectively adherence to an agreement through national means. In initial consultations with our Allies within the NAC, we should explain, if asked, that "national means of verification" refers primarily to reconnaissance satellites, in the capabilities of which we have great confidence. In regard to these capabilities, we should at a later date hold appropriate briefings for heads of NATO governments and NATO Permanent Representatives. (Similar briefings were held in 1961-64.)

The same consideration of providing adequate assurance applies to consultation with selected members of Congress, and even more so. It will be important to hold these consultations at an early date, and on a more candid basis than with our Allies. It will be essential to persuade Congress that the proposed talks and any subsequent agreement will advance the national interest and that the question of verification has been thoroughly studied and evaluated. The briefing on our general approach

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to, and the problem of, verification should be restricted to a limited number of key members of Congress, and should take place within the context of a general discussion of our arms control proposal. The briefing could include a general review of the findings of SNIE 11-13-69. These members of Congress should be advised not to reveal publicly our approach to verification until a clearer picture of Soviet attitudes emerges from the talks.

Since our briefings may have to be detailed and specific, further details regarding the scope of these consultations should soon be decided by the Secretary of State, in consultation with the Secretary of Defense, Director of Central Intelligence, and Director of ACDA.

Statements to the Press and the Public. Although the likelihood of publicly provoking the Soviets into a confrontation over the operation of observation satellites may diminish once talks begin, it would still be desirable to maintain initially a discreet silence in public on this subject. The problem of verification will be the object of secret negotiations for some time to come, and, as indicated above, we will want to sound out Soviet attitudes.

Accordingly, we initially should not volunteer statements to the press concerning means of verification of a strategic arms limitation agreement. Our standard response to press inquiries, once the talks begin, should be that "we are, of course, aware of the need to have adequate means of verifying compliance with such an agreement."

Eventually, however, information concerning our negotiating

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position will probably leak to the press. At this stage, we should be ready to acknowledge that "the United States is prepared to place maximum reliance on national means of verification." If asked by journalists to explain this term, press spokesmen may, on a background basis, say that the newsmen are free to draw their own conclusions. Any public statements by United States officials on this subject should follow the same guidelines set forth above for the press.

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